



## **HIRING A LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR**

### **I. CREATE A SCOPE OF WORK**

Be prepared. The more specific you can be about the end result you're looking for, the easier it will be to agree on the overall scope of work. Do your homework – look through magazines and websites with southwest landscape images and collect pictures of what you like; if needed, ask a consultant to help. Then,

- ❑ Clearly list what services you need; e.g., design, preparation and alteration of land for horticulture and arboriculture, installation of irrigation systems and controls, etc. Ask for their experience and qualifications for each phase of work you are requesting. For example, some companies do not have expertise in installing irrigation systems or design consultation but can install your brick patio. Match the company's skill and experience level with the work you need.
- ❑ Determine what is considered extra work and how is that charged? Storm damage, vandalism, irrigation repair, etc.
- ❑ Detail how clean the site is to be left. Specify how trash will be removed.
- ❑ Are there any HOA rules they need to be aware of? What time can their crews start, how late can they work, do they need to have uniforms, name badges, or do they need to check in at each visit.

### **II. COMPANY QUALIFICATIONS**

The company must be licensed, bonded, and insured in the State of Arizona. Ask for copies of proof. They should have a current Contractor's License for Landscaping, Irrigation Systems, or both; not just a business license. Check with the Registrar of Contractors for the contractor's license status and whether there are any unresolved complaints online at [www.azroc.gov](http://www.azroc.gov), or by calling 602-542-1525, or toll free within Arizona at 1-877-692-9762.

### **III. GET BIDS**

- ❑ Get at least three bids from licensed contractors. These contractors, and any sub-contractors used on the job should be licensed to do the specific trades related to your project. The bids should be in writing, should be detailed as to what is and what is not included, and should include an estimate of how long the work will take.
- ❑ Ask questions. Ask the contractor to explain plans, specs, and company procedures. Pay attention to how they respond to you. Are they listening to what you have to say? Is this someone you can work with?

### III. GET BIDS (cont'd)

- ❑ When comparing bids, be sure to consider any differences in plans, quality of materials used, and scope of work. Select the contractor with a good track record and demonstrated experience with your type of project. Be wary of an exceptionally low price.
- ❑ Ask for a list of references. Be sure that it includes people with landscape projects similar to the one you are considering. Take the time to contact these references. Ask if the contractor maintained effective communication throughout the project. Did they provide a safe jobsite for family members and pets? Did they clean up after themselves? Were delays (other than weather related) kept to a minimum? Was the job completed within budget? Did they stand behind their work and respond promptly to requests and questions? And the age old question, “Would you hire this contractor again?”
- ❑ Ask for a company profile – how long they have been in business, the structure of the company and the number of employees. What professional credentials or affiliations do they have? Are they members of a related trade association? Have they completed any landscape industry certification programs? (A free copy of the handout “**Know Your Pro**” – *Landscape Titles and What They Mean*, is available online at [www.glendaleaz.com/waterconservation](http://www.glendaleaz.com/waterconservation))

### IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ Get a written contract specifying estimated start and completion dates. It should include all the details of the job; e.g., it should include a detailed description of the work to be completed, with all costs outlined and a list of materials to be used; it should include the amount of any deposit required, as well as any scheduled payments during the job and terms upon completion; it should also include all warranties offered on both the work and on any plant materials installed.
- ❑ Make sure all agreements are in writing, including any changes to the original agreement.
- ❑ Confirm that all contractors used on your project have worker’s compensation insurance for employees.
- ❑ Don’t make payments ahead of schedule or before work is completed according to your agreement.
- ❑ Deposits or down payments should be reasonable.
- ❑ Do not make the final payment until you’re satisfied with the work performed, and NEVER PAY IN CASH! Legitimate contractors do not solicit door to door, do not require cash payments, do not require the use of materials left over from another job, and do not require full payment up front.
- ❑ Check the contractor’s license status again on the day you’re scheduled to sign the contract even if you did so previously. License status can change overnight.